

TOWN OF COTTAGE CITY
TOWN HALL MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 12, 2020
7:00pm

IN ATTENDANCE

Commissioners: Amarche, Wheatley, Young, Urey, Givens
(Commissioner Amarche left the meeting around 8pm, and later returned to join the meeting).
Town Manager: Consuella Barbour
Town Treasurer: Mike Lightfield
Town Attorney: Kevin Best
Public Works Supervisor: Gregory Pinkney
Code Enforcement Officer: Barry Wade
MNCPPC representatives: Presenter: Robert Patten; Greg Ford: Public Safety Liaison; Wanda Ramos: Deputy Area of Operations; Sonya Louie: Assistant Division Chief or Park Planning and Development

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Commissioner Wheatley.

Public Comments- Resident David Proctor commented about the cat population in the neighborhood. He would like the community to be proactive and encourage neighbors to not let their cats out of the house. He recently had a litter of kittens born in his storage shed.

The Commission looked over the minutes and financials for July 2020.

Motion to approve the minutes and financials for July 2020 with the edits given. **MOTION APPROVED**

Amarche: Aye, Young: Aye, Wheatley: Aye, Urey: Aye, Givens: Aye

Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Anacostia Trail Lights – Bob Patten gave a presentation on the trail lighting. He discussed that a lot of communities have asked for lighting at different areas of the Anacostia trail. Northwest Branch trail area in Langley Park and our community has asked for lighting. They have done research studies, trying to find what the precedents were and what other park agencies are doing for lighting. The second and third steps were to design and install lighting in these two communities. At the end of their first step of the research, their consultants recommended and had discovered a technology that would work as a pilot project (meaning if things did not work out, they would be able to adjust it or remove it if necessary). They are progressing to implement that pilot project in the two communities In Cottage City; they studied the area all the way down to the bridge in Bladensburg. The goal for their pilot project, is to enjoy the energy efficiency of solar power and LED lighting. Warm light with no glare, low impact lighting pollution with a wide linear lighting footprint. They also want low maintenance technology and they want to make it inviting and provide a sense of safety. They are concerned about what the impact of lighting might be on the natural environment along the trail. The lighting will be minimal but helpful and will be limited to the amount of time it will be on along the trail. They brought in professional design consultants which really helped them with the research. He continued to discuss and show his PowerPoint of the different aspects of the lighting they would like to use. The analysis established 4 different zones where they can

make adjustments to provide slightly different approaches to the lighting in each different zone. They will have a plan how they would like the lighting when it is installed, but even after it is installed they will still be able to make adjustments if need be. They plan to have signs that will explain to people what the program of the lighting is. They now have a solar powered portable security camera trailer and they would keep that on the trail and possibly provide another one.

Commissioner Urey asked how the dimming feature is controlled. The dimming can be programmed to dim down or come up at a certain time. Their parks are open for bicycling from 5:30am-midnight. If the city wanted the park open the entire night, at a certain time the lights could dim down, and the motion censored could be turned up. Instead of the lights being off after a certain time. In their study they identified that the best thing that creates a more secure trail is the more users you have and eyes on the trail and security cameras, that lighting alone doesn't make your trail more secure. If they have a the lighting on, they will be inviting pedestrians to use the trail, we don't want to be doing that if people think it's a better time to use the trail because hardly anyone is on the trail. Commissioner Urey was wondering what the effects would be on the ecosystem. Commissioner Givens stated that a conversation would be helpful to discuss the timing of the lights being on. Commissioner Givens asked about having stands next to the soccer field to be put back.

The Commission moved to the East Gate Industrial Park agenda item next, and decided to go back to the Trail Lighting afterwards.

Mr. Decker stated he is hopeful that the Commission will give them the town support in front of the county council to retain their light industrial zoning and keep them in business. He had a draft of a support letter he would like Commissioner Wheatley to sign.

Motion to support Mr. Decker and the business people in East Gate in their effort to keep the zoning industrial and the Commission sign the support letter. MOTION APPROVED
Amarche: Aye, Young: Aye, Wheatley: Nay, Urey: Nay, Givens: Aye

Resident Colleen Kelley discussed a separate project she has been trying to work on along with Bob. There is a slope from Bladensburg Rd in the access trail down to the Anacostia trail that is all gravel and dirt. When it rains, it is treacherous. She said it seems a pity to have such great lighting in place, when we can't even get from our own community to the trail. Bob has advocated having that area paved, she wanted to alert the community about that piece of land and to possibly draft a letter to whomever is responsible for the paving to encourage them to finish off that piece of land. Bob stated he would follow up with that again. He will let the Commission know if a letter is necessary, he believes it is oversight. He will be getting back to us.

Chief Ayers is very interested in the lighting. He believes it will be safer with the lights installed. He thinks it is a great idea.

Attorney Best stated this is a wonderful project. His issue is over a year ago, when Chief Lowry initiated the Mutual Aid Agreement with the MNCPPC, but there was a similar sister agreement with Colmar Manor that was hammered out and was introduced to the Park and Planning Commission body. However because there was a delay with Colmar Manor, the town's mutual

aid agreement never got approved. So he stated the town's police department should not be entering into MNCPPC property (unless it is an emergency, hot pursuit, or a felony is being witnessed or occurring) until the Mutual Aid Agreement is signed off on and approved.

Commissioner Young stated she does think we need to move forward on that. She also stated getting the bleachers back that was removed from Parks and Planning would be greatly appreciated by the community; she would also like a flood light to be put by the ball field. She believes the bleachers were removed because a lot of criminal activity occurred there. Ms. Sonya stated that the bleachers were removed at the request of a town official because there was activity going on there that everyone was uncomfortable with. Lighting may not be a possibility for that area, but she would like to get together with the Commission and have another more in-depth conversation about this separate issue with the field and bleachers.

Chief Ayers discussed moving forward with getting body cameras. The camera has different special features on it. It has a shot feature, incase an officer gets shot, it will turn on. It has another feature that the Chief can turn on the camera to see a situation in real time. The chief is asking to entertain a motion to waive the competitive bidding requirements of the charter and pursue a contract with this vendor and the contract would be presented to the commission at a later date.

Motion to waive the competitive bidding requirements for purchasing body cameras by Axon in the amount of \$7,730.00 due to the fact that Axon has unique features on their camera (gun shot sensor and quality field checks). MOTION APPROVED

Amarche: Absent, Young: Aye, Wheatley: Aye, Urey: Aye, Givens: Aye

The Commission discussed Ordinance 2020-03- AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF COTTAGE CITY ADDING CHAPTER 17 (COMMUNITY GARDEN) OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF COTTAGE CITY REGARDING THE USE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE LOTS KNOWN AS 4222 COTTAGE TERRACE, AS A COMMUNITY GARDEN; AND GENERALLY RELATING TO USE OF TOWN PROPERTY BY THE COMMUNITY GARDEN CLUB .

Community Garden Member Diana Guelespe spoke about the community garden The Commissioners would like Diana to look over the Ordinance to mark and make any necessary changes, and Ms. Barbour will work with the gardeners on this ordinance. Then the town manager will make sure the attorney gets the document.

Corporal Pay Increase – The Chief and Ms. Barbour discussed the amount of rate of pay for the two corporal positions. Commissioner Givens asked is a budget amendment required for a minor cost of change within the budget. If you are changing the detailed line items you do not have to do a budget amendment. If you are changing the major line items, you do have to go thru the process of a budget amendment.

Motion to increase Corporal Batenga pay to \$23.71 per hour (within that amount is an extra \$.25 for being bilingual) and Corporal Thompsons pay to \$23.46 per hour. MOTION PASSED.

Young: Aye, Amarche: aye, Wheatley: Aye, Givens: Aye, Urey: Aye

Budget Emergency Ordinance 2020-03 – Ms. Barbour discussed the budget emergency ordinance which changes the amounts for the police department now incorporating the Corporal Pay, the code enforcement car, and the CARES ACT fund that we will be receiving.

Motion to adopt Emergency Ordinance 2020-03 AN EMERGENCY ORDINANCE OF THE COTTAGE CITY COMMISSION TO ADOPT A BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR THE 2020-2021 FISCAL YEAR. MOTION PASSED

Young: Aye, Amarche: aye, Wheatley: Aye, Givens: Aye, Urey: Aye

The Town received a request from Elizabeth Seton High School, they are asking for \$60.00 for their 60th anniversary. There is one student from Cottage City that will be attending that school this year. The Commission decided they wanted to make the donation.

Motion to donate \$60.00 to Elizabeth Seton High School. MOTION PASSED

Young: Aye, Amarche: aye, Wheatley: Aye, Givens: Aye, Urey: Absent

Town Manager Update – The website is moving along. The content from the current site is being transferred to the Civicplus site. Ms. Barbour will have a link that she will have for the Commissioners so they can look at how the website it coming along. Ms. Barbour and Ms. Gabriel will have training on how to work the website. The website should be able to go live by the end of the month.

Public Works Update – The Commission received a project spreadsheet, which lists what projects have been requested, and the status of the projects. Public Works will be working on the gazebo in the next week or two. Three storm drains were called into the county, who has come out and inspected them. Mr. Pinkney has been checking on when the county will be able to come out to schedule to unclog them. Public Works has been spraying sidewalks to kill weeds. They have been paying attention a lot to Bladensburg Road to make sure all the weeds are killed. The retaining wall is falling apart in the front of the building. The retaining wall was put up by a company in the past. They are trying to locate the same stone in order to fix the retaining wall. Commissioner Wheatley asked if the town hall sign next to the town hall will be painted. Mr. Pinkney stated they will try to paint it themselves. In the past parks and planning has always restored the sign, but the last time they did it took too long. Commissioner Givens asked about the fencing near the garden. Mr. Pinkney stated that the fencing should be coming in on the 20th of August. Commissioner Givens asked about the lighting on Cottage Terrace. Mr. Pinkney stated that Pepco needs some specs sent to them about the LED lighting we will want. Then Pepco will be able to install the lighting. Commissioner Young asked about if a light would be put on the pole near her house on Cottage Terrace, there is a pole there with no light. Commissioner Givens stated that he would like to see our electric cars having a Cottage City logo and Public Works written on the side for identifiable purposes. The Commission was in agreement of that idea. Commissioner Urey asked about the status of the tot lot repairs: the weeds, and the panels in the back of the playground. Mr. Pinkney stated they sprayed weed kill around the fence line. Commissioner Urey would like a timeframe for the paneling/fence area.

Police Department Update – Code Enforcement Officer, Mr. Wade, updated the Commission on the water issues on 43rd Ave. He contacted WSSC. They referred him to PG County Public Works. They referred him to a PG County engineer. The Inspector is going to try to secure help

and try to locate someone who can help with the specific water issues going on. Resident Colleen Kelley stated that it is not just the sump pumps, she is confident that it is not going to fix the run off problem; it is a storm water drainage problem. She stated there is a grant we may be able to get financial help with it. Mr. Wade stated that the water doesn't drain properly on that street. Chief Ayers stated that the surplus vehicle got inspections done; they will be going to MVA to get the title and tags for the vehicle. It will be outfitted as well. Lucienne Smith is doing an excellent job getting donations for the backpack drive. She is getting different supplies that the kids will need for school. Posters will be given out to all the residents in order to ensure we get each of the Cottage City kids what they need. Families will be asked to register to get a backpack. The Chief discussed he has inquired about a 15 passenger van from the county, once he has more information to present, he will give it to the town manager to send to the Commission. The van would be used for seniors and the police explorer program. The police explorer program has been in the process of seeing how many children want to participate, and figuring out cost associated with the program. Commissioner Givens is in favor of using town funds to pay for the uniforms etc, for the program because it the program does benefit the town. The Chief discussed that the trailblazer came in.

Ward 1 Report – Commissioner Young thanked the staff and the different departments for all the hard work and programs they have been working on during COVID-19.

Ward 2 Report – Commissioner Amarche will be working with the Chief for stress prevention to help give officers some strategies to use to help them perform better and keep cool heads on the job.

Ward 3 Report – No report.

Ward 4 Report – Commissioner Givens stated that the Commission has come together during these difficult times, and how he feels that the entire town staff and departments, town attorney, town treasurer, and town Commissioners are doing a good job in coming together to provide the community a proper service. He thanked the Chief for all his hard work and creativity in helping the town.

At-Large Report – The English classes will be starting back up on Monday's via ZOOM. Monday, August 17, 20 will be the first one at 6:00pm. She invited everyone to attend.

The Commission decided to reschedule the closed session.

Motion to adjourn the meeting. MOTION PASSED

Young: Aye, Amarche: aye, Wheatley: Aye, Givens: Aye, Urey: Aye